

A Just and Impartial

1509/1227.

CHARACTER

OF THE

CLERGY

OF THE

Church of England,

OCCASIONED

By Her Majesty's most Gracious Bounty to
Them, in giving Her whole Revenue of
First-Fruits and *Tenths* for the Augmen-
tation of Poor Livings.

L O N D O N :

Printed and sold by A. Baldwin in Warwick-lane, 1704.



A Just and Impartial
CHARACTER
 OF THE
CLERGY
 OF
 The CHURCH of *England*, &c.

HER MAJESTY having been graciously pleased to communicate to Her Parliament, Her Intentions of providing for Her Poor Clergy, by giving Her Revenue of First Fruits and Tenths towards their better Maintenance: And the Parliament having, at Her Majesty's Instance, seconded and promoted these Her Pious and Charitable Purposes, both by extending the Date of Her Majesty's Bounty, and by enabling others to follow Her Royal Example: This noble and unparallel'd Benefaction hath (as every thing that is New and Great uses to do) given rise to much Discourse, and to many different Reflexions, according to the different Dispositions and Views of the Persons who have considered it.

A 2

All

All Men agree in admiring that *exceeding Goodness* and *Largeness of Heart*, which God hath given to Her Majesty, over and above all Her other Princely Endowments; and this last Instance of Her Munificence is allowed by the most perverse Interpreters of the Actions of Princes, to be an undoubted Proof, that *She Loves our Nation, and our Church*.

The *Poverty of the Clergy* is almost as well known, as Her Majesty's Goodness. That there are many of them very meanly provided for, is acknowledged by all sorts of Persons, even by those who wish the rest of them in as Low a Condition; as well as by such, who think it a Scandal to our most Holy Religion, that any of the Ministers of it should be confined to so slender a Maintenance. Tho' there are very few, either Friends or Enemies to the Church, who can at present imagine, that there are such Numbers of Poor Clergy, as upon a Survey there will be found to be; or that those among them, who are Poor, are so very Poor, as it will appear they are, when an Account is brought in of the full Value of their Livings.

Some who profess to like this Charity extremely, (as indeed there are none that have the Confidence to profess otherwise) pretend to be afraid, that Her Majesty's Bounty may not be managed with that Advantage to the Church, as it ought to be; they are under some Doubts, lest it should not be fairly and equally distributed, and they can't tell, but some improper Use or other may be made of it. But all Objections of this Nature, if they are not already Answered by Her Majesty's Character, who is known to intend nothing else but the True Interest of the Church and People of *England*, will (I doubt not) be thoroughly taken away, by the Orders and Directions She will think fit to give for the Regulation of this Charity, in Her Charter of Incorporation, which is suddenly expected.

On the other side, those who are real Friends to the Design now set on Foot, and encourag'd by Her Majesty, and Her Two Houses of Parliament, for Augmenting the
Main-

Maintenance of the Poor Clergy, reckon up abundance of Advantages that are likely to accrue from it.

They say, That by this Means, not only a great many particular Ministers, whose Livings are raised, will be enabled to support themselves and their Families, and will find more Respect from their Parishioners, than they now do; but that much more Credit will be retrieved to the whole Order, by taking off the Contempt, which the Poverty of many of the Clergy had brought upon them; and that this will very considerably tend to the Advancement of Religion, when a great many Parishes are supplied with Persons better qualified, and more respected, than they now are.

They are likewise of Opinion, That not only the Clergy, but the Gentry also will find their Account, in the intended Augmentation of Poor Livings; because, when this hath taken Effect, many of the younger Sons of Gentlemen will be better, and more honourably taken Care of in the Service of the Church, and so become more Useful Subjects of the State, than at present they can be; considering the Scanty Provision commonly made for them, and the great Difficulty of finding suitable Education and Employment for them any other way.

It is further said, among many other Things which are brought, to shew how far the Usefulness of this Charity may extend, that both Gentlemen and other Freeholders, in those Parishes where the Livings are augmented, will find themselves somewhat eased in their Taxes to the Queen, and very much in their Assessments for the Poor; who will be sure to receive a great deal of Relief from their Ministers, as soon as they are capable of sparing it from the Maintenance of themselves and their Families.

These are the common Subjects insisted upon, when the last Act of Parliament in Favour of the Poor Clergy is talkt of. But I shall endeavour both to justify, and recommend Her Majesty's Charity expressed in that Act, from another Head, which, tho' little touched upon in common Discourse, seems to me of great Weight and Moment in
this

this case; and that is the *Character and Temper of the English Clergy*: Of which, I hope to give such an Account in these Papers, as may satisfy the World, *That they are worthy for whom Her Majesty should do this.*

Now the first and principal Branch of their Character I take to be this; That they are generally plain, ingenuous, undesigning Men, who are utter Enemies to all sorts of Artifice and Craft in Matters of Religion, who teach the Word of God in Simplicity and Sincerity of Mind, and make it their business to discourage every Instance of Superstition and Bigotry they meet with; who neither impose upon Mens Faith, nor Lord it over their Consciences, nor sooth any Man in a false dependance upon particular Opinions or Practices, without a through endeavour to do the Will of God in all manner of Virtuous and Holy Conversation.

Priest-Craft is a word which hath served many a Man for a full Answer to all the Arguments that have been brought in Defence of Religion; and *John Dryden's* celebrated Text, that *Priests of all Religions are the same*, has been taken for true Gospel by those who believe no other. But if it had not been for the Clergy of the Church of *England*, these Gentlemen, who are now so free in their Censures of them, would have found themselves, at this time, under all the Hardships and Oppressions that *Priest-Craft* could devise, without the liberty of Complaining; and without daring to insult the Tricks and Impositions of *Popery*, with the same Boldness they now do the plain and simple Truths of *Christianity*.

For to the great Learning, Integrity, and Courage of the *English Clergy*, do we owe that Blessed Reformation of Knowledge and Religion which at present we enjoy. They were the Men, who, upon the first Dawnings of Light upon them, after a thick and universal Darkness, had long Reigned in these Parts of the World, discovered the *Frauds* and *Corruptions* which were crept into the *Church of God*: They asserted the true Ancient Faith of *Christ* against all the false Glosses and Additions wherewith it was disguised; and they convinced the World, that it was Truth alone, and
Truth

Reformation
of the Church
of England.

Corruptions of the
Church of England
but not the Church

Truth of the highest importance, which they contended for, by many Losses and Sufferings, and by Death it self, the last and most undoubted Witness of the Faithfulness and Sincerity of Humane Pretensions.

And ever since that time, as often as any occasion hath offered, they have constantly pursued the same Design of exposing all the Tricks and Artifices of the *Romish Church*; and of guarding the *Faith* against all Corruptions and Impositions from every Quarter: A late eminent instance of which, we have in the great Zeal and Integrity which They shewed, at a time, when those, who now Lay Priest-Craft to their Charge, would upon the least pressure, have put themselves under the Conduct of craftier Priests than ours, so as to become their Tools and Instruments in establishing a Lie, and in persecuting those that contended for the Truth.

Thus have our Clergy behaved themselves upon all Occasions, with a clear Courage and Sincerity, with respect to the Religion they maintain: and agreeable to their constant *Practice* is their *Doctrine*, now and always taught by them. For none of them pretend to be *Infallible* themselves, or to submit their Judgment to any that are so. They profess to take all their Religion from the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and the Writings of the Primitive Christians, who, for 300 Years and more, were Men of such Characters, and in such Circumstances, as exempted them from all those Suspicions which some of their Successors were liable to.

Both the sacred Writings, and all other whatsoever, upon which they ground their Faith, are open to every Man, in the best Editions and Translations that the most Learned among them could give us; who have also taken all the care and pains imaginable, to fix the Authority of each Book, and to determine the Time and Circumstances of every considerable Action, in which the History of Christianity is concerned.

If *They* have been mistaken in any of the Original Doctrines or Facts which they believe; or if they have made any wrong Deductions from them, either in Point of Opin
nion

nion or Practice, the Press is open, and they are ready to hear what any Man has to say ; and, upon Conviction, to alter whatever they have taken up upon insufficient grounds: There being no Doctrine or Practice whatsoever in the Church of *England*, which is of more Concern or Advantage to our Clergy than the contrary, upon any other account than as it is *true* ; unless it be thought a matter of Interest in them to maintain, that those who *wait at the Altar* ought to live *by the Altar*, when 'tis very manifest, that they could have lived much better any other way, in which they had thought fit to employ themselves.

Then, as to the Exercise of their *Ministerial Office*, tho' they have just Reason to magnifie their Commission in being appointed the *Messengers of God*, and *Stewards of his Word*, yet do they not use any indirect Ways of gaining the Esteem, Affection, or Admiration of those who are committed to their charge. They pretend to no *extraordinary Gifts* either of *Miracles*, *Prayer*, *Preaching*, or *Interpretation* ; nor do they ascribe any other Virtue or Efficacy to the most solemn Acts of their Ministry, than what God has expressly annexed to the Obedience of those who serve him in the way he hath prescribed. Besides which Obedience to the Institutions of God, whatever renders both theirs, and the Peoples Devotions and Religious Performances acceptable to God, is (as they teach) nothing else but the good Dispositions of Mind, with which they are offered ; which are such Gifts, as *They* share in common with other Men, according as they are more or less sincere Believers and Doers of the Will of God.

And if we ask them concerning the *Language* they use in their Holy Offices, and all the *Manner and Circumstances* of their *Publick Worship*, they profess to have no other Rules to go by, but those of *Decency and Order*, such as seem to them, in the Places and Times they live in, to be most suitable to those Notions of Respect and Reverence which obtain among Men.

In their *Sermons and Writings*, they make their constant Appeal to the *Scriptures*, which contain that *sound Form of Words* first published to the World, and to those other Ancient

cient Books, which bare witness to the Scriptures, and give an account how they were received and understood in those Ages which immediately followed the Publication of them : And they declare upon all Occasions, that they cannot go beyond the Word of the Lord thus delivered to them, to say less or more. They desire not to be believed upon their own Authority, but call upon all Men every where to search the Scriptures, and to examine the Ancient Records, that so They may try Their Doctrine and Works by them.

They apply all those Advantages of Learning, which They have got by their particular Education, to render the Sacred Writings plain and easie to all Capacities. To this end, They have dismiss'd all *Obscure* and *Allegorical* Ways of Speaking, they have separated Religion from *Philosophy* ; and, even in Matters of Revelation, they distinguish between *curious Speculations* and *necessary Truths* ; insisting principally upon the latter in all their Discourses.

And in pressing what is necessary, they are very careful not to break the Strength and Power of Religion, by dividing it ; and are continually exhorting Men not to put their confidence, in being zealous for such or such particular Doctrines ; constant to such Religious Practices and Customs ; firm to such a Communion or Church of Christians, or in any the like Pretences ; but to keep the whole Faith pure and undefiled, and to abound in all manner of Good Works.

They think it more proper to apply to the Reason than the Passions of Men ; and therefore do they deliver the Message of God to them, with a Gravity and Seriousness suitable to the importance of what they say ; without any Arts of recommending *Themselves* more than their Doctrine to the People ; which is, now especially, so general, and so distinguishing a Character of the Clergy of our Church, that, if any among them endeavour to raise themselves a Name, either by long Prayers, or long Sermons ; loud, or extempore Discourse ; or by any extraordinary Emotions of Spirit, or Gestures of the Body ; or by accommodating

B

their

their Doctrine to the corrupt Palate of their Hearers: These Men are sure to meet with the least Esteem among their Brethren, however they may be cried up by those they intend to please: It being the current Doctrine of the Church of *England*, that the Ministers of it are only *Messengers*, who are tied down to the plain words of their Message, (the Authority of which, they wholly and solely depend upon as coming from God); and that all the various Ways and Methods of delivering it, are meer *Humane* Attainments, for which they challenge no Consideration or Respect to themselves upon a *Religious* Account. These are the common Sentiments of the Clergy, with regard to their Duty of Preaching and Instructing those under their Charge: And they look upon all other Ways of Addressing to them as *improper*: Tho' they have Charity to believe, that those who make use of wrong Methods of Applying to the People, do it not always with an ill Intention.

And, as *They* perform all the solemn Acts of Divine Worship which belong to their Administration, without ascribing any extraordinary Power to themselves, or intrinsic Value to the *Ordinances*, any further than that God hath ordained such things to be done by the Hands of such Men; and consequently will be best pleased to be served in the Way he hath appointed; so also, where ever, they perceive the People inclined to lay too great Stress upon any of these outward Ordinances performed by the Ministers of God, such as *Preaching, Praying, Absolution, Sacraments, &c.* they are extremely careful to discourage all superstitious Opinions concerning them; which, upon the least countenance from them, would be very apt to prevail, and which they might easily convert to their own Credit and Advantage, if they were not more concern'd for the Honour of God and the true Interest of Religion. Many Instances of which wrong Disposition of the People, and honest Zeal of the Clergy to suppress it, there are very few Parish Ministers but could furnish the World with.

And indeed, I do not know any such utter Enemies to all kind of *Superstition*, and all ill-grounded Persuasions whatsoever in the whole Mass of Mankind, as the Clergy of the Church of *England*.

England. Tho' they do not deny, but that there may be such a thing as *Witchcraft* now; That in these our Times as well as formerly, there may be *Apparitions*, and many other *extraordinary Events*, above the usual course of Nature; and that Men may be sometimes forewarn'd by *Dreams* or *Waking Impressions* of what may happen; yet there are no Men whatever more diffident of common Relations concerning these Matters, none more industrious to discover any Fraud or Imposture of this Kind; and no Men make less use of what cannot be discovered to be false. For they ascribe every thing of this Nature to the unsearchable Ways of God; without building any particular Doctrines upon it, or drawing any Consequences from it, for their own Benefit or Honour: Much less do they believe, that the Truth of the Christian Religion needs any such Foreign Support. And all other Ways of foretelling what's to come, either by the *Stars*, or by any other, more Ludicrous, tho' not less reasonable, way of imposing upon Mankind; as likewise *Omens*, and all Distinctions of Times and Things into *Lucky* and *Unlucky*, &c. with every thing of this Stamp, they look upon as fit only to be believed by such Persons whose Understandings are not made to imbrace what's Reasonable and Just.

This I take to be a very fair Character of our Clergy, with relation to that Office they bear in the *Church of God*. The next thing I shall advance in their behalf, is, that they are *true to the Interest of their Country*.

I know very well that it hath been objected to them of late, that they maintain slavish Doctrines, prejudicial to the Laws and Liberties of *England*, and tending to favour Arbitrary Power. But the whole of this Matter (as far as an impartial Man can judge, who is no way concern'd to justify himself upon this Head) is in short this; That most of our Divines, in the Reign of King *Charles the Second*, preach'd up what is commonly called *Passive Obedience*, which one would think by the Title of it, were a very harmless Doctrine, and ought not to expose the Defenders of it to any more Sufferings than what they had obliged themselves

to bear: But so it is, that the poor Clergy have been miserably persecuted for this Opinion, in a worse manner than they were ever like to suffer by it. I will propose the Notion fairly to the World, together with the grounds the Clergy went upon, and their Behaviour since, and then leave it to all unprejudiced Men to judge, how far they have been to blame upon this Account.

account of
Obedience.

Now the Substance of what they taught concerning *Passive Obedience*, as far as ever I could understand them, was this; That Government in general was appointed by God as necessary to the good of Mankind; and that consequently we were obliged to obey those who were set over us for Conscience sake: That the Supreme Authority of this Realm of *England*, was, by the particular Laws and Constitutions of our Country, lodged in our Princes, according to such Limitations in the Exercise of it, as they had consented to, and bound themselves to observe: That in all Matters relating to Government, which were not contrary either to the *Laws of God*, or the *Land*, we were every one of us obliged to obey the Commands of our Princes to the utmost of our Power: And that in all such things, where they exceeded their just and legal Bounds, and where the Laws of our Country had provided no other Remedy for us, there it was our Duty to submit patiently to any Hardships that might be laid upon us for disobeying an illegal Command, rather than to break the Laws of the Land *our selves*, in order to right our selves against the Prince's violation of them.

That the Laws of the Land are the full and adequate Measure of Government, and Obedience was always so acknowledged a Proposition among our Divines, that I cannot at present recollect any of them that ever taught the contrary. And indeed, such admirable care is taken by our Laws, that our Princes should not violate them, not only by making all their Ministers and Instruments accountable for every illegal Action that is done, but by laying a necessity upon the Prince himself, to punish them in his *Publick Courts*, for obeying his *private Will* in any thing contrary to Law: This, I say, is so well regulated in our Government, and there

there are so many Persons appointed, as Checques one upon another, in the Process of every Order issued out from the Prince, that if any of those concerned in Executing an Illegal Command, would but decline their *Active Obedience* in such Cases, or if any of those impower'd to prevent, obstruct, or punish every Breach of Law, would but do their Duty as they are required by Law to do, there would never be any Occasion for other Subjects to exert their *Passive Obedience*.

But supposing it should so happen, that any Prince should find Subordinate Officers enow to concur with him in Oppressing his Subjects, contrary to Law; it was then the Opinion of our Divines, that those who had no Legal Power granted them of defending themselves against such Oppression, should chuse to bear their Sufferings patiently, with an humble dependance upon God for his Assistance in due time; rather than have recourse to such Methods of Redress, as were in no wise warranted by the Laws of the Land.

And that *They* made the *Law* the sole Rule of Conscience in this Case, is very plain from their Conduct and Behaviour, as well as from their Writings and Discourses. For when they Preach'd and Writ, That it was not lawful for Subjects to take up Arms, upon any Pretence whatsoever, without a Commission from their Prince so to do, &c. it was at a Time when both they and other Persons were commanded to Declare so: And I dare engage to prove that, when the Doctrines of *Kingly Power* and *Non-resistance* were at the height, the highest Expressions used in the Sermons of those Times, never exceeded the Language of *Acts of Parliament*. But when that Declaration was called in, and the Law was delivered in more moderate and wary Terms, the Clergy conformed their Discourses and Behaviour to them. They have not indeed retracted their former Doctrine, nor assigned any Cases, in which it is lawful for Subjects to resist their Princes; because the Law hath made no Declaration upon this Head neither. But if I may be allowed to speak what I imagine to be their Sense in this Point, it is this: That nothing but *Apparent Necessity* can

A more shuffling

No necessity will justify Resistance & such

justify Subjects in taking such Methods for their Security, as are directly and expressly against the plain Letter of the Law, as it now stands; And, if a Man had rather suffer every thing that can happen to him, than take any such extraordinary way of defending himself, he ought not, in their Judgment, to be condemn'd for Unfaithfulness to his Country, in foregoing the Right he hath to some Share in its Welfare.

When there is such a Necessity as this, *They* think there's no need of Casuists to determine. The Sense of a whole Nation can hardly ever be mistaken; and when the People are divided in their Opinions about it, any thing near to an Equality, in such a Case, the Misery and Desolation of all must be the unavoidable Consequence of Violent Measures, from what Part soever they come. And when we are sure to be in a worse Condition by our Resistance, than by sitting still; or when this is only very probable, any other Men, as well as Divines, can decide what ought to be done.

As to the *Affection of the Clergy to the Present Government*, I do not believe there were any Men in the Kingdom better pleased, than they were, to see Her Majesty upon the Throne, before they had this particular Obligation to Pray for Her long and prosperous Reign over us. And, as they lately gave us most eminent Proofs of their Zeal against Popery, and of their Firmness to the *English* Constitution, both in Church and State, by their Preaching and Writing; and (as far as the Law allowed them to go) by their Active Opposition to all Illegal Encroachments; and this at a Time, when they did not think themselves at liberty to depart from their Passive Principles: So there is no doubt to be made, but that *now*, when the Law hath secured them against a *Popish Successor*, they will not only *be the last to bring Him back*; but they will do whatever Law, or Conscience will permit them to do, to prevent both Popery and *Arbitrary Power* from getting the least Footing among us again.

Another

Another thing, which, in my Judgment, distinguishes the Clergy of the Church of *England* from most other Teachers of Religion, is, *Their Moderation, with respect to those that dissent from them.* I am thoroughly aware that those, who with ill to them upon other Accounts, are apt to cover their Enmity with this plausible Accusation, That they are of a *Persecuting Spirit.* But this I am sure is a very False Charge upon the Body of the Clergy, who have never, by any Publick Act or Declaration, given the World the least Reason to believe, that they approve of any kind of Severity upon the Account of *Religion.* And, as to the Opinions of particular Men among them, tho' some perhaps may have delivered themselves too loosely or warmly upon this Head, at some certain Junctures, when a Concurrence of Inflaming Circumstances hath over-pow'd their Judgments; yet I cannot remember, at present, that I ever read any of our Divines, who calmly and deliberately maintained, that 'twas lawful and proper, to Punish Men merely for not Conforming to the Laws and Customs of our *Church*; when their Conscientious Dissent was not founded upon such Principles as were plainly inconsistent with the Safety of *the State*: I do not, I say, know of any Book, written by a Divine of any Character among us, where this Doctrine is expressly taught, unless it be a small Discourse, in Answer to a *Letter concerning Toleration*: The Author of which (if it be the same that I have heard) is indeed a grave, sober Divine; But the utmost Severity he allows to be used towards Dissenters, is only some small Pecuniary Penalties; and those are not to be laid upon them by way of Punishment for their False Opinions, nor directly to compel them to come into our Communion; but only to oblige them to attend to, and examine those Arguments, which are urged for their Conviction; and which, without such Admonition, he supposes, they would never hearken to, or consider as they ought. This is the utmost of what this Author contends for; and even this moderate qualified Severity he hath since, (as I have

Not our Principles to be inconsistent with the Safety of the State. No one may be punished for their dissent to this Author.

This is justifiable by Christian Heresies

been told) upon further Reflexion, given up, and quitted; as not justifiable by the Christian Religion.

All the Apologies that have ever been made, either by Church-Men or States-Men, of our Communion, for the *Penal Laws* now in force among us, are framed wholly upon these Grounds: *viz.* That the Persons who are subject to these Laws, had been led by their particular Principles to disturb the Peace of the State, before they were made; that the same Principles would continually dispose them to attempt Alterations in the Government, by Illegal Methods: That the Laws were made chiefly for Terror, in order to prevent Disturbances; and were never put in Execution, but upon some fresh Provocation given; and that if the Persons liable to suffer by them could give any effectual Security to the State for their Good Behaviour, they should be as sure of Ease and Protection, as any other Members of the Commonwealth.

But, whatever were the Grounds of making such Laws, it is certain that the Clergy have no hand in the Execution of them; neither do they like or approve them any further, or upon any other Account, than as they shall be found, by those who sit at the Helm, to be plainly and directly necessary to preserve the present Constitution of our *English* Government. They did not in any wise, either by their Applications, Writings, or Discourse, endeavour to oppose the *Toleration*, when it was moved by those who were proper Judges, and Guardians of the Safety and Interest of the Nation: Nor have they made any Steps towards getting it Repealed, or shewed themselves discontented at its continuance, since. All that they ever wished might have been further provided for in that Act was, That the Persons allowed to Preach in any *Separate Congregation*, might be as well known, and the Bounds of their Doctrine as well settled, as they are in the *Church of England*: That so, no other sort of Teachers or Doctrines might creep in after the *Toleration*, than were intended to be allowed by it.

And, as this is the Temper of the Clergy, with regard to those Passions of *Cruelty, Bigotry, and Revenge*; which

which I take them to be as free from, as any sort of Men in the World; so will I undertake further to Justifie their Moderation, with respect to Gain and Power.

Covetousness is a Vice so little imputed to the Clergy, that they are more generally Arraigned for the contrary Fault, of not making due Provision for their Families; tho' I am confident, this is also very often not the Fault of the Men, but their Circumstances.

There is no Instance to be produced, where a Clergy-Man hath gained any thing to the Revenue of the Church, more than did of Antient Right belong to it; but there are abundance of Churches lessen'd and impaired in their Yearly Income, either by the Neglect of the Ministers in demanding and collecting their Dues; or for want of their asserting their Right to what was denied them; or by their making unskilful Compositions, and suffering prejudicial Modus's to take place: All which is to be ascribed to these two Causes; Their being wholly taken up with their Spiritual Business and Learned Studies, and their great desire to preserve Peace, and avoid Contention in their Parishes.

And, for any other extraordinary Ways of making a Gain or Profit of the People, over and above what accrues to them from the Legal Establishment of their Dues, I know of none that are practised among them. Nor indeed is there any Ground or Foundation for such Practices in the Church of England. For Doctrines, there are none professed or allowed among us, which have any tendency to enrich the Clergy, or to bring any thing into the common Treasury of the Church. What our Ministers receive, both for their stated Attendance on their Duty, and for Occasional Offices, is no more than what is allotted them by Law, and they are content with their Portion be it great or small: And, be they never so industrious and careful in the discharge of their Function, they neither require, nor insinuate their expectation of more than is due to them.

And, for a further justification of the Clergy upon this Head, I shall particularly consider their Conduct with relation to Sick Persons; because some have pretended to fear, lest they should take Advantage of Mens Weakness in such

been told) upon further Reflexion, given up, and quitted; as not justifiable by the Christian Religion.

All the Apologies that have ever been made, either by Church-Men or States-Men, of our Communion, for the *Penal Laws* now in force among us, are framed wholly upon these Grounds: *viz.* That the Persons who are subject to these Laws, had been led by their particular Principles to disturb the Peace of the State, before they were made; that the same Principles would continually dispose them to attempt Alterations in the Government, by Illegal Methods: That the Laws were made chiefly for Terror, in order to prevent Disturbances; and were never put in Execution, but upon some fresh Provocation given; and that if the Persons liable to suffer by them could give any effectual Security to the State for their Good Behaviour, they should be as sure of Ease and Protection, as any other Members of the Commonwealth.

But, whatever were the Grounds of making such Laws, it is certain that the Clergy have no hand in the Execution of them; neither do they like or approve them any further, or upon any other Account, than as they shall be found, by those who sit at the Helm, to be plainly and directly necessary to preserve the present Constitution of our *English* Government. They did not in any wise, either by their Applications, Writings, or Discourse, endeavour to oppose the *Toleration*, when it was moved by those who were proper Judges, and Guardians of the Safety and Interest of the Nation: Nor have they made any Steps towards getting it Repealed, or shewed themselves discontented at its continuance, since. All that they ever wished might have been further provided for in that Act was, That the Persons allowed to Preach in any *Separate Congregation*, might be as well known, and the Bounds of their Doctrine as well settled, as they are in the *Church of England*: That so, no other sort of Teachers or Doctrines might creep in after the *Toleration*, than were intended to be allowed by it.

And, as this is the Temper of the Clergy, with regard to those Passions of *Cruelty, Bigotry, and Revenge*; which

which I take them to be as free from, as any sort of Men in the World; so will I undertake further to Justifie their Moderation, with respect to Gain and Power.

Covetousness is a Vice so little imputed to the Clergy, that they are more generally Arraigned for the contrary Fault, of not making due Provision for their Families; tho' I am confident, this is also very often not the Fault of the Men, but their Circumstances.

There is no Instance to be produced, where a Clergy-Man hath gained any thing to the Revenue of the Church, more than did of Antient Right belong to it; but there are abundance of Churches lessen'd and impaired in their Yearly Income, either by the Neglect of the Ministers in demanding and collecting their Dues; or for want of their asserting their Right to what was denied them; or by their making unskilful Compositions, and suffering prejudicial Modus's to take place: All which is to be ascribed to these two Causes; Their being wholly taken up with their Spiritual Business and Learned Studies, and their great desire to preserve Peace, and avoid Contention in their Parishes.

And, for any other extraordinary Ways of making a Gain or Profit of the People, over and above what accrues to them from the Legal Establishment of their Dues, I know of none that are practised among them. Nor indeed is there any Ground or Foundation for such Practices in the Church of England. For Doctrines, there are none professed or allowed among us, which have any tendency to enrich the Clergy, or to bring any thing into the common Treasury of the Church. What our Ministers receive, both for their stated Attendance on their Duty, and for Occasional Offices, is no more than what is allotted them by Law, and they are content with their Portion be it great or small: And, be they never so industrious and careful in the discharge of their Function, they neither require, nor insinuate their expectation of more than is due to them.

And, for a further justification of the Clergy upon this Head, I shall particularly consider their Conduct with relation to Sick Persons; because some have pretended to fear, lest they should take Advantage of Mens Weakness in such

a Condition, to dispose them to give more to the Church than it was proper for them to give. But this is the most groundless Suspicion that could possibly be entertained of them.

For, *They* are not eager to thrust themselves upon People when they are Sick ; they very rarely go to them before they are sent for ; and they are seldom sent for , to Persons of any Substance, till all their Worldly Concerns are settled, and they are just ready to depart. And the Reason why they are not forward in proffering their Service to the Sick , nor the Sick in desiring it, is, because it is the constant Doctrine of our Clergy, that a late and Death-bed Repentance is extreme hazardous, and very little to be depended upon ; that when a Man is dying, their Ministry is of least use and effect to him, because he is then least capable of doing what he hath put off to that time, and least able to judge of his own Condition ; and whatever the Minister can then do for him (if his Life had not been hitherto answerable to his Profession) there can be but very little hope given him, that this will avail him any thing hereafter. And, if he had lived well before, the Minister can only ratifie and confirm his well-grounded hope, and recommend him to that God whom he had faithfully served. What Profit or Advantage then can accrue to the Clergy from all this ?

'Tis true indeed , They are commanded to exhort Sick Persons to *Acts of Charity* ; but then they tell them, that whatever hath been unjustly gotten must be restored ; and whatever is justly due to any Man must be paid ; and a competent Provision must made for their Family and poor Relations, before there can be any Place for other *Charity*. Then as to the Charity that is given , tho' they tell them that it is the best way of disposing of what they have to spare, and tho' it may be better, or at least more tolerable for them in the Day of Judgment, for Works of this nature, than if they had bestowed their Goods to other Uses, yet they assure them, that there's no composition to be made with God for their Sins, and that whatever they give, either to the Church or the Poor, it will not be accepted by way of Atonement for a wicked Life, but, notwithstanding all their Gifts and Oblations,

lations, they must answer for every evil Deed they have done, which a true and unfeigned Repentance, has not wiped away. And, as all their Exhortations to Charity are thus guarded, I will venture to say this farther of them, that I never heard of any that in their Applications to Sick Persons, upon this Subject, ever solicited them to do any thing either for themselves or the Church in general; tho' I do not know a more useful sort of Charity in the World, than what Her Majesty hath now recommended to us by Her Noble Example.

But the surest way of judging of what they are like to attempt for advancing the Interest of the Church this way, is to consider what they have done already: Because, if their Influence be as great as some have been pleased to represent it, some Effects of it will certainly appear; and yet, upon the strictest Inquiry that can be made, I believe it will be found, that they have not hitherto done any great matters either for themselves or the Church. For tho' there hath been a liberty given, by Act of Parliament, for these forty Years past, for any Patron of an unindowed Vicarage, to restore the impropriated Tithes that formerly belong'd to it, and to every other Man to augment what poor Living he pleased to 100 *l.* *per An.* There hath not been much bestowed upon the Church since; and those few Gentlemen who have laid out their Charity this way, have done it in their life-time, at their own motion only, or induced by the Example and Arguments of that Learned Lay-man Sir *Henry Spelman*, and not by the Solicitations, much less Spiritual Promises, or Threatnings of Clergy-men, in the Seasons of Weakness and Fear: A single instance of which, I defy the most bitter Enemies of the Order to produce.

Neither have they consulted their own particular Interest, more than that of the Church in general: For should we look over the Wills at *Doctors Commons*, we should find but very few Legacies left to Ministers of the Church of *England*, by any of their Congregation; very seldom the respect of Mourning, without a Funeral Sermon for it, which commonly makes it a hard Bargain. And there are as few voluntary Presents made to them by any of their rich Parishioners, while living, tho' their Labours, may often deserve, and their Circumstances

} a good plenty

stances want such Assistance. Which could never so fall out, if our Clergy did not industriously, and conscientiously avoid all indirect ways of engaging the Affections of their Hearers, and turning them to their own benefit; which is a Talent, that (if we may judge by those that exercise it) requires no great stock of Cunning or Wisdom, when a Man can give himself leave to prostitute the Dignity of his Character to such base and unworthy Ends. But, thanks be to God, we have very few who *wait at the Altar*, that can allow themselves to take any unjust, fraudulent, or unbecoming ways of *living by it*. But especially, with relation to the Sick, they have so little Design of gaining by their Death, that it is the general Practice of our Clergy, to refuse whatever is offered them for their Attendance upon Men in their Illness; tho', by the importunity of Mens Friends, and their superstitious Expectation of the Effect of what's done at such a time (notwithstanding all that is told them to the contrary) Ministers are forced sometimes to spend more of their time this way, than they can well spare from their other (as they truly believe) more necessary Duty.

Nay, so far is it from being a general Imputation upon our Clergy, that they mind their own Interest too much, and are too intent upon the things of this World, that 'tis really look'd upon as matter of ill Report among them, for a Clergy-man to raise an Estate out of the Church, tho' it be done without the least breach of legal Justice, and with no more Care and Application than what Men of other Professions think themselves obliged to use, to avoid being censured for indiscreet Management. And, if there be any of them who do not abound in Acts of Hospitality and Charity above other Men of the same Rank in point of Fortune with them, they are esteemed by the rest of their Brethren, to be wanting in their Duty.

I cannot but remark one extraordinary thing more in *Their* behalf upon this Head; which is this: That, when the Church is so very meanly provided for, that, by the computation of such as have look'd more particularly into this matter, there are about Three thousand Livings in *England* and *Wales*; none of which exceed the Yearly Value of Thirty Pounds.

Two

Two thousand of which are not above Twenty Pounds . Year apiece, and a thousand of those not above Twelve Pounds *per An.* This, I say, is much to be wondred at, that, when there are so many poor Livings now in *England*, which have been so ever since the Reformation, there should be found, for so long together, Persons enow tolerably qualified to supply them, and that, in all this time, they should make no publick Representation of their Poverty to the Government, and should not use their utmost Endeavours to solicit a better Maintenance for themselves, with the same Zeal, tho' less Out-cry and Noise, than every little Branch or Society of Traders and Workmen do, when they find themselves in a worse condition to subsist than they used to be; tho' their Hardship, in the common course of things, is like to end much sooner. There can be no other reason given of this their extreme Patience, but that the Church of *England* Clergy have learn'd, in *whatsoever State they are, to be better content*, than any other sort of Men would be in the same.

Which Observation will hold true of them, with respect to Power as well as Riches. For, as there is hardly any Established Church upon Earth which hath less Power than ours hath, so there is none that hath more freely given up what they once had, and more easily bore the diminution of what remained to them since. All that they now desire, is, to preserve what is left, and to employ it all in the correcting and amending themselves, and in promoting true Religion and Virtue among others. This they look upon to be the principal End of all the Power they are intrusted with, and they desire, not only to be permitted, but to be called upon, and by all proper and legal Methods to be obliged to exercise it this way: Want of Discipline (which is indeed want of Power) being one of the chief Objections made to our Church by those who dissent from it.

The Temporal Honours and Privileges they enjoy, they look upon only as Guards to their *Character*, and upon no other account to be desired or maintained, but as they serve to protect their Temporal Rights, and to render their Ministry more effectual.

D

These

*Is the Clergy un-
to their Trust
base & dishonour
not true to the intent
the Charter for so
giving up their
Powers & Rights.*

These are the most *publick*, and most distinguishing Branches of the *Character of the English Clergy*. And, as to their *private Virtues*, and Qualifications, it must be owned, That they are Men of like Passions and Infirmities with others, and consequently, that there must be Faults and Defects amongst them. But this I will venture to say, That these are neither so great, nor so common, as what are found among other Men: But were they greater than they are, yet those who despise the Clergy for their Poverty, and hate them for their Care to preserve and propagate Religion, are, of all Men, the least qualified to throw Stones at them, either for their want of *Learning*, or *Morals*.

But, whatever Faults the Clergy are guilty of, they are perfect Strangers to all *Art* and *Hypocrisie*: They are an open, free-hearted, grateful sort of Men; and, tho' perhaps these Qualities may sometimes betray them into an imprudent Warmth, and an unguarded Declaration of their Sentiments, yet there are no Men more true to their Professions and Promises, none more ready to do all good Offices to their Brethren, none more sensible of any Kindness or Favour shewn them, and none more grateful to their Friends than they are; as, I doubt not, will be plainly seen upon this Occasion, not only in all instances of Loyalty and Respect to the Queen, which they are bound to upon many other Accounts, but in the Honour and Esteem they will always pay to those Persons, who have been most active in promoting Her Majesty's gracious Intentions to them.

And, blessed be God, they have found many great and zealous Friends, upon this Occasion, and, which renders their good Offices more valuable to them, they have had the satisfaction of knowing, that they were regarded in this Matter, as *Ministers of God*, and *Teachers of Virtue and Religion*, and not only as a *Party of the State*.

For those Gentlemen who were traduced for designing only some private Interest, or State-end, in promoting the *Bill against Occasional Conformity*, have shewn, by their disinterested Zeal for this *Act for the Poor Clergy*, that they meant the Advantage of the *Established Church* by the other, whether they judged right, or no, as to the Time and Consequences of it; which

which I will not pretend to determine. And such as did not think fit to concur with their Friends in the former Measures, but were hearty for this last Act, have given us sufficient reason to believe, that they also wish well to the true Interest of Religion, and the Established Church, tho' they did not judge, that a Bill against *Occasional Conformity* was, at this juncture, seasonable or proper.

Those who were alike zealous in their Opposition to both these Bills, have given us no light yet to discover, whether they are Friends to the Church of God among us, or not. But, since they profess to be Members of our Church, and are, I verily believe, most of them, of no other; I hope, they will, by their generous Contributions to this Charity, in their own Way, convince us, that they did indeed like the thing, tho' they did not approve the whole Method of Establishing it.

And truly, I have good reason to believe, as well as hope, that the generality of all sorts of Men, of what Party and Denomination soever, (excepting only the Irreligious and Prophane) will be Friends and Well-wishers, and those of them, who are able, will be contributors also to this Work, in proportion to their Fortune and Condition.

There are, I am afraid, some Persons, so little sensible of the necessary Influence of Religion in supporting all Government and Society, and such implacable *Enemies* to the Clergy, *because they tell them the Truth*, that they will not encourage a Profession of Men, whose Lives, Doctrines and Characters, *upbraid them with their offending the Law, and object, to their Infamy, the Transgressings of their Education*; but did they consider how much they are beholden to their Ministry for the safe enjoyment of all their Pleasures and Advantages, they would think it worth their while to contribute to the Maintenance of Persons, who were to teach their Children, Servants, and Tenants, to perform those Duties towards them, without which, they would soon be reduced to worse Circumstances than the poor Clergy are now in.

I know of no other sort of Men that can be supposed to dislike this Charity, unless it be some of the wild and illiterate Sects of Dissenters, who are Enemies to all *Humane Learning*, and a *Regular Ministry*. But these are Men of no Account in any thing relating to Religion or Government, as having taken pains to make
them-

themselves less capable Judges of what's reasonable and just, than they were otherwise enabled to be, by the meanness of their natural Understanding, and Condition.

All the other *Dissenters* will be disposed, by their Liberality and Respect to their own Ministers, to acknowledge, that we ought to have the same regard for ours; and since they would not undertake to supply so many thousand Livings as are now proposed to be augmented, for the Salaries which at present belong to them, they do not, I am sure, think us so far estranged from the true Principles of *Christianity*, but that they had rather these Livings should be supplied by the Ablest Ministers we can get, in our way, than that the Gospel should not be preached in those Places.

Nay, I do not despair, but many of them will be contributors too, as believing this to be the likeliest way for their *own Ministers* to enjoy what they have without Envy, when the *Clergy of the Established Church* have a sufficient Maintenance as well as they; and their Ministers may be the more willing to allow them to contribute, upon a prospect of creating, by this Means, a better Understanding between Them and the *Established Clergy*, that so, upon a due Compliance on their Side, and Moderation on the other, such Condescensions may be, sometime or other, made, as will let them into the Church, without being losers by the Bargain.

I have nothing further to add, but a word or two in my own Defence: That I have said nothing of the Clergy, but what I am persuaded in my Conscience, belongs to the far greatest part of them, (and we can speak no otherwise of Bodies of Men); that I am sufficiently qualified to say thus much, as knowing the Men and their Conversation, better than any Person whatever that has a different Opinion of them; and that I expect no other Benefit from the Charity I am pleading for, and recommending, than an Opportunity of Contributing to it my self, as far as my Circumstances will allow.



